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UNCLAS KINSHASA 001665

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: 15 MILLION VOTERS REGISTERED

REF: KINSHASA 1621

1. (SBU) Independent Electoral Commission (CEI) officials said they had registered 15 million voters as of October 4. This represents over fifty percent of the initial estimate of 28 million potential voters nationwide. They noted the vast majority of voter registration centers have opened in all but the last two provinces to begin the registration process, Bandundu and Equateur (both of which began on September 25). In Orientale province 1041 out of 1069 planned centers opened for operations; in Katanga the figure is 1144 out of 1191; in Western Kasai 614 out of 636; in Eastern Kasai, 738 out of 826; in North Kivu, 722 out of 792; in South Kivu, 511, out of 669; and in Maniema, 351 out of 450. In Bandundu the CEI has opened 121 out of 979 centers and in Equateur 125 out of 965. CEI officials said they expect the voter registration process to end by mid-November and feel it is possible to register a significant majority of Congolese voters by that time.

Good News Tempered by Tragedy

2. (SBU) Progress in the voter registration process has been tempered by a CEI press statement announcing the capsizing of a boat October 1st in the Tshuapa River in Equateur province, carrying 100 passengers (94 policemen traveling to guard registration centers in Boende and 6 electoral staff). According to the statement, there are preliminary reports of 10 dead and 9 missing, including 17 policemen and 2 electoral staff. The CEI believes the capsizing was the result of a fire on board; at this point, however, it is unclear what caused the fire.

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